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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that change imposed from above by a bureaucracy will usually engender resistance. The education system under the new democratic South Africa recently underwent change. This paper presents findings of a study that examined whether principals in South Africa perceived any internal or external resistance-to-change factors in their schools. A survey of all secondary school principals in the Free State Province of South Africa (n=81) elicited a 79 percent response rate. Results indicate that principals did not perceive either internal (psychological) factors or external factors (which include changes in material and organizational conditions) as creating resistance to change. However, psychological factors played a more important role than external ones in implementing change. The highest ranked factor was the fear that change would harm job security. The results suggest that principals did not perceive resistance to change because it occurred primarily at the internal level and they therefore do not have to manage the change. One table and one figure are included. (Contains 24 references.) (LMI)

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RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

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RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

1. Introduction

Any form of change or non-change is usually accompanied by resistance. Zaltman and Duncan (1977:59) allege that "resistance to change is the most commonly encountered response to an advocated change (and) it is typically given far less attention than it deserves". If change is implemented, resistance can arise. Corbett *et al.* (1987:36) also indicate that resistance to change is a more common action/reaction than the acceptance thereof. Ritchie (1986:97) thinks that an individual's resistance to change is so strong that " ... people would sooner die than change, and most do".

This situation can be avoided if principals (and managerial bodies) of schools, who are primarily responsible for the implementation of any form of change, recognize the factors that cause resistance to change, and know how to manage resistance to change on their level of authority (Hall & Hord, 1987).

2. Aims of research

Research aim 1: to determine the different forms of resistance to change

Research aim 2: to determine the types of resistance to change

Research aim 3: to determine the different factors/reasons for resistance to change, and

Research aim 4: to determine empirically the principals perceptions of the factors that play a role in resistance to change in their schools and to what extent these resistance factors play a role in the change process.

3. Points of departure

The way in which resistance to change is typified, analysed and managed, mainly depends on the theoretical points of departure. There are two concepts about resistance to change, namely, the *revolutionary* perspective (change enforced from below) and the *reactionary* perspective (reaction to change enforced from above).

From a revolutionary point of view, resistance is seen as a logical necessity in society (i.e. education) to change existing (and oppressive) systems and structures. In educational context both Giroux (1983) and Chase (1988) argue that the use of resistance is related to moral and political injustice. That is why resistance is seen as a positive means that must bring about a critical movement against a dominant ideology. Resistance is therefore an aid to (revolutionary) change. Giroux (1983:107) also makes the important remark that power cannot be exercised only by means of domination (suppression, discrimination), but also by means of resistance. That is why resistance is a necessary form of power, and the display of power (in education) a form of hope for the aggrieved. As a result, resistance is not only opposing behaviour (opposition) by the revolutionary, but a way of self-realisation and social emancipation that are accompanied by radical methods such as protests.

From a revolutionary perspective, it further appears that the school and pupil must be used to express resistance to the existing systems in order to change the social order outside the school, but also in the system (Aggleton, 1987). Thus: if the educational system and practices do not change, resistance must be employed to change and improve the existing practice (Berkhout & Bondesio, 1992:127).

In contrast to the above-mentioned view (the revolutionary enforcement of change), *reactionary* resistance to change is also seen as a logical necessity in an organisation. This reaction arises when the existing system, customs and practices - the status quo - are indeed changed (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979:107). This view of resistance to change is thus a reaction to and a result of change that must be neutralised, and obviated or avoided (Smith & Crane, 1990:48). On the other hand, the revolutionary sees resistance as the beginning or cause of a process of change that can result in radical action.

In a reactionary context, the teacher's reaction to change can be passive (such as psychological resistance, negative perceptions and attitudes) or active and aggressive (such as opposing views, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts - Coetsee, 1993). In both revolutionary and reactionary actions, resistance to change can be manifested by radical or aggressive resistance. This aggressive form can be manifested in radicalism in the form of sabotage, destruction of property and intimidatory actions which may even lead to the loss of life (Coetsee: 1993:1823).

The types of and dynamics between passive, active and aggressive resistance to change are illustrated by Coetsee (1993:1823) and is given in *figure 1*.

According to Coetsee, the figure (*figure 1*) indicates that the basis of passive resistance to change are negative perceptions, attitudes and opposing points of view. This is the

milder form of resistance. Coetsee (1993:1823 - 1824) continues and says: "The more severe forms of active resistance and aggressive resistance are characterized by negative perceptions and attitudes eventually resulting in severely destructive behaviour. Blocking behavior refers to actions directed at stopping or ending the change, while subversion, sabotage, destructing, terrorising and killing are directed not only at stopping change but also at disruption and even destroying social systems in which change takes place."

Seen in the light of the reactionary perspective, resistance to change in this context may now be described more accurately. Zaltman and Duncan (1977:63) describe resistance to change as "any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo". Dalin (1978:23) also says that from research it appears that resistance to change may be defined as a struggle/rebellion against the change of existing customs and practices that can be overcome by means of certain methods and interventions (in other words, managed). Davis and Newstrom (1985:545) define resistance to change in a managerial context purely as the rejection of or partial refusal to accept change. Coetsee (1993) believes that resistance to change is usually seen as something negative, but that it can also have positive value. That is why the concept resistance, in managerial context, usually has a negative connotation, but can be positively applied to the advantage of the school (organisation). The latter two matters will be dealt with in greater detail later on.

From the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that resistance has two poles. If there isn't change, there can be resistance which results in the revolutionary enforcement (revolutionary perspective) of change. The purpose of this type of resistance is to enforce change from below. Opposing this: if change does indeed occur, there is also resistance (which is predominantly passive, although in certain cases it might also be active) and an effort to maintain the status quo (reactionary perspective). The aim of the latter form of resistance to change is to oppose the change that is bureaucratically implemented from above. *The focus of this paper will be precisely on the latter-mentioned perspective.*

4. The nature of resistance to change

Actions and reactions, the maintenance of the status quo, or renewal, and change and resistance are always to be expected in view of the structured nature of the school. These elements or forces must be present in organisations, for it is part of the inherent nature of an organisation (Schein, 1985a:37). Kahn (1982:416) even thinks that if these forces

are not present in an organisation, it "would lack the day-to-day consistence of patterned behaviour that is a defining characteristic of organization".

Teachers have the reputation that it is their nature or commonplace for them to find change difficult to accept (Corbett *et al.*, 1987:36-37). The intensity of their resistance to change usually depends on what is being changed and whether the stability of the school is being threatened. That is why resistance to change usually is a reaction of an individual who wishes to protect himself against the effect or results of change (Zander, 1961:543). Resistance to change is not only a lack of acceptance or the opposite of acceptance. Resistance to change usually develops when renewal is implemented and an individual is compelled to change his existing behaviour or actions and habits. The more fundamental and emotional the change, the greater the resistance to it (Moerdyk & Fone, 1987:14).

Zaltman and Duncan (1977:63) focus on another interesting dimension of resistance to change. Similar factors can be present in both acceptance or resistance to change, but they are experienced or manifested differently. Attention will be given to this later. In this way, any proactive step or action can result in reactive behaviour. For example: a new subject didactical development is suggested for implementation in the school. One teacher may experiment with the new method whilst another will maintain the existing and "proven" methods and oppose the new development. From an educational point of view, change can only be received and experienced positively if it contributes to the improvement of existing educational practices (De Villiers, 1989:9).

Lawrence (1969:112) indicates that technological change does not evoke the strong resistance that social change does. Individuals who resist, see the change as a threat to their social role or relationships.

When an individual resists renewal and wishes to maintain the status quo, this action usually acquires a negative connotation. Resistance to change (passive and active) thus acquires the denotation of rebellion and opposition manifested in a variety of factors that may be found, *inter alia*, on the educational, managerial, implementational or personal level, and can usually be interpreted in terms of the teacher's own interest (Davis & Newstrom, 1985:241). It therefore appears that change can be successful or problematic, depending on how it is handled and implemented (managed).

All behaviour and actions that occur as a result of renewal must not be summarily typified as resistance. If this should happen, resistance to change is summarily seen as bad (negative) and change or renewal as good (positive). Resistance is sometimes necessary, logical, fundamental, honest, and even functional and can serve to clarify

motives, convictions and loyalties - it can therefore be valuable (see paragraph on the value of resistance in contrast to change). Generally, resistance to change by an individual implies uncertainty about the future, his own future role and behaviour in a new situation. That is why Lawrence (1969) says that resistance is a visible symptom of a problem and is not readily perceptible. According to him, resistance to change is an individual's or group's cry of distress which implies that they are being led into a direction they do not like.

5. The extent of resistance to change in education

Very little information is available on the extent of resistance to change in education. Only a few studies could be traced, for example, that of Trump (1987) and that of Roush and Perry (1993). From Trump's study, carried out in secondary schools in Ohio (USA), it appeared that resistance to new ideas was the second greatest single factor experienced by school principals when implementing new teaching programmes.

Trump (1987:91) found that principals of secondary schools experienced problems in implementing renewal in particularly two areas, namely, the time allocated for its implementation and the teachers' resistance to new ideas.

In respect to the latter, 16,5% of the school principals indicated that resistance to change had been the main reason that had prevented them from implementing change. From the total response (n=116), 64% of the school principals cited resistance to change as one of the five main reasons, and 56% saw it as one of the three main reasons that prevented them from implementing renewal.

From research it therefore appears that resistance to change is an important factor for school principals to consider when implementing change in schools.

From the above-mentioned, it appears that resistance to change emanates, inter alia, from a variety of factors or reasons.

6. Factors/reasons for resistance to change

No change occurs without sacrifice and adjustment. Individuals initiating change must therefore take particular account of the various factors that give rise to resistance to change. Johnstone and Sharp (1979:47) say that change can be a painful experience, but

that the outcome can be refreshing and rejuvenating for the teacher as well as the pupil and the school as a whole.

That is why resistance to change is actually an integral part of the whole process of change. From an overview of the literature on the reasons for resistance to change, it appears that the reasons are comprehensive and diverse. The reasons may vary from the ignorance of an individual to a complex of integrated factors that emanate from self-interest and factors of a more psychological nature, to factors of which the origins are to be found in both the educational system and the school. It is important, however, that the reasons for resistance to change be analysed and understood. Without this it would be difficult to handle (manage) resistance to change.

From the literature it appears that various authors identify various reasons for resistance to change. A few authors have classified the reasons for resistance to change in main categories and then distinguished a number of subfactors under every main category.

- * Zaltman and Duncan (1977) distinguish four main categories: reasons for resistance to change that are of a cultural, social, organisational and psychological nature.
- * Coetsee (1993) however, questions these categories. He avers that the distinction between the social and organisational categories is not meaningful, which he then corroborates by referring to sources.
- * Dalin (1978) distinguishes four main categories emanating from the normative, practical, authoritative and psychological factors.
- * Redmon (1982) also distinguishes four categories of factors that give rise to resistance to change: general factors, resistance by the school or department, and administrative and personal factors.
- * Hanson (1985) only distinguishes two main reasons for resistance to change. These reasons can be located on the level of the educational system and in factors that include, for example, a bureaucratic implementation of change (Ritchie [1986:98] calls it "bureaucratic hassle"), cost, time and energy. The other category is the personal or individual level of self-interest and includes psychological factors.

In this research the factors that play a role in resistance to change were clustered in two main categories viz. internal and external factors. This classification was the basis of construction of the questionnaire.

Internal factors include factors such as:

Fear that change will cause a loss in job security; the loss of established customs which provide security; fear of the unknown; the conception that change will not lead to improvement; a disruption of the status quo (existing practices) which presently provides satisfaction; and fear that change will not succeed.

External factors include factors such as:

Increased work pressure; an irreconcilability of cultural characteristics with the proposed change; the lack of resources to facilitate change; insufficient evaluation of the progress of the change; and the lack of ethics to experiment at a school.

7. Empirical Research

7.1 Background

With regard to the changed situation in education in the new democratic South Africa, De Beer (1995) found in his research that little or no resistance to change exists in schools. This contradicts what is commonly expected.

7.2 Specific aims of empirical research

Aim 1: To determine if principals perceive any internal or external resistance factors to change in their schools.

Aim 2: To determine to what extent these resistance factors to change play a role in schools.

7.3 Research design

Questionnaire

An Likert-type questionnaire was constructed with the aim of determining school principals' perceptions on which factors give rise to resistance to change in their schools.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections. In section 1 biographical and demographical data were collected (10 questions). Section 2 dealt with the internal resistance factors to change and consisted of 15 items (items 10-25). Section 3 dealt with the external factors and consisted of 16 items (questions 25-40).

Population

The population consisted of all the school principals ($n=81$) in secondary schools in the Free State Province of South Africa. The feedback was 79%.

Statistical techniques

Mean scores and effect size were used as well as two way frequency with chi-square.

7.4 Discussion

Mean Scores

From the computing of the data to determine the mean scores of the responses of the school principals, it was found that there was a specific ranking in the factors that play a role in resistance to change. The data is tabled in *table 1*.

Effect size

The effect size was also computed from the data. The principals were asked to respond *to what extent they perceive* certain factors playing a role in resistance to change. They were also asked to indicate to what extent these factors *actually play* a role.

To determine the effect size, the d-value of questions 10 - 40 was determined. To determine the d-value the following cut off points (according to Cohen, 1988) were used:

$d = 0.15$ - small effect size; $d = 0.35$ - medium effect size;

$d = 0.6$ - big effect size

From the data no medium or big effect size could be determined. Only a small effect size was determined on nine out of the 31 questions. It can therefore be concluded that there are no practical significant differences in the two responses of the school principals.

Two way frequency with chi-square

A two way frequency with chi-square was computed to determine if there are meaningful differences between academic qualifications and experience and the factors that play a role in resistance to change. No meaningful differences could be determined through this exercise.

8. Findings

From the empirical research findings it became clear that:

- * both the internal and external resistance factors to change are not commonly perceived in schools by school principals
- * both the internal and external resistance factors to change play to a lesser extent a role in resistance to change according to the school principals, but
- * of the first 10 factors, nine were internal and only one an external resistant factor (cf. table 1). From this result it can be concluded that the resistance factors on the psychological level (internal level) play a more the important role than external resistance factors in the implementation of change
- * a fear that change will cause a loss in job security, had the highest ranking order
- * these findings contradict the findings of Trump and what was commonly expected.

9. Discussion

From other studies (De Beer, 1995; De Villiers, 1995) it seems from the perspective of school principals that change is implemented in schools and that teachers voluntarily accept this change as imperative. Therefore there is little resistance to change from the perspective of school principals.

If this is indeed the case, it is a positive perception of the educational situation in South Africa. It also implies that principals are of the opinion that the time is right for change in education.

The findings can also imply that there is resistance to change in the schools, but that the principals do not perceive these resistance (because these factors are internal 'actors'), therefore do not have to manage the resistance. This conclusion can be verified as De Beer (1995:133) remarks that principals do not plan change but use crisis management. From this it can be concluded that school principals do experience problems but do not know that these problems are resistance to change. Therefore they cannot make a link

between the problems they experience in the change process and resistance to change because they are unaware of a phenomenon such as resistance to change.

However, to have a complete picture, these studies will have to be followed up and the teachers' perceptions of those factors that play a role in resistance to change in education should also be determined.

9. Conclusion

When change is implemented in the school, a disturbance of the status quo occurs. The school as organisation and more specifically, the teachers in the school react to the change by generating energy (resistance) to maintain the internal or existing equilibrium of the status quo. The energy that is generated is often directed at either the acceptance, but mostly at the rejection of that factors that upset the balance. The result of the complex of factors that give rise to this, is usually perceived as resistance to change.

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Figure 1

Types of Resistance to Change

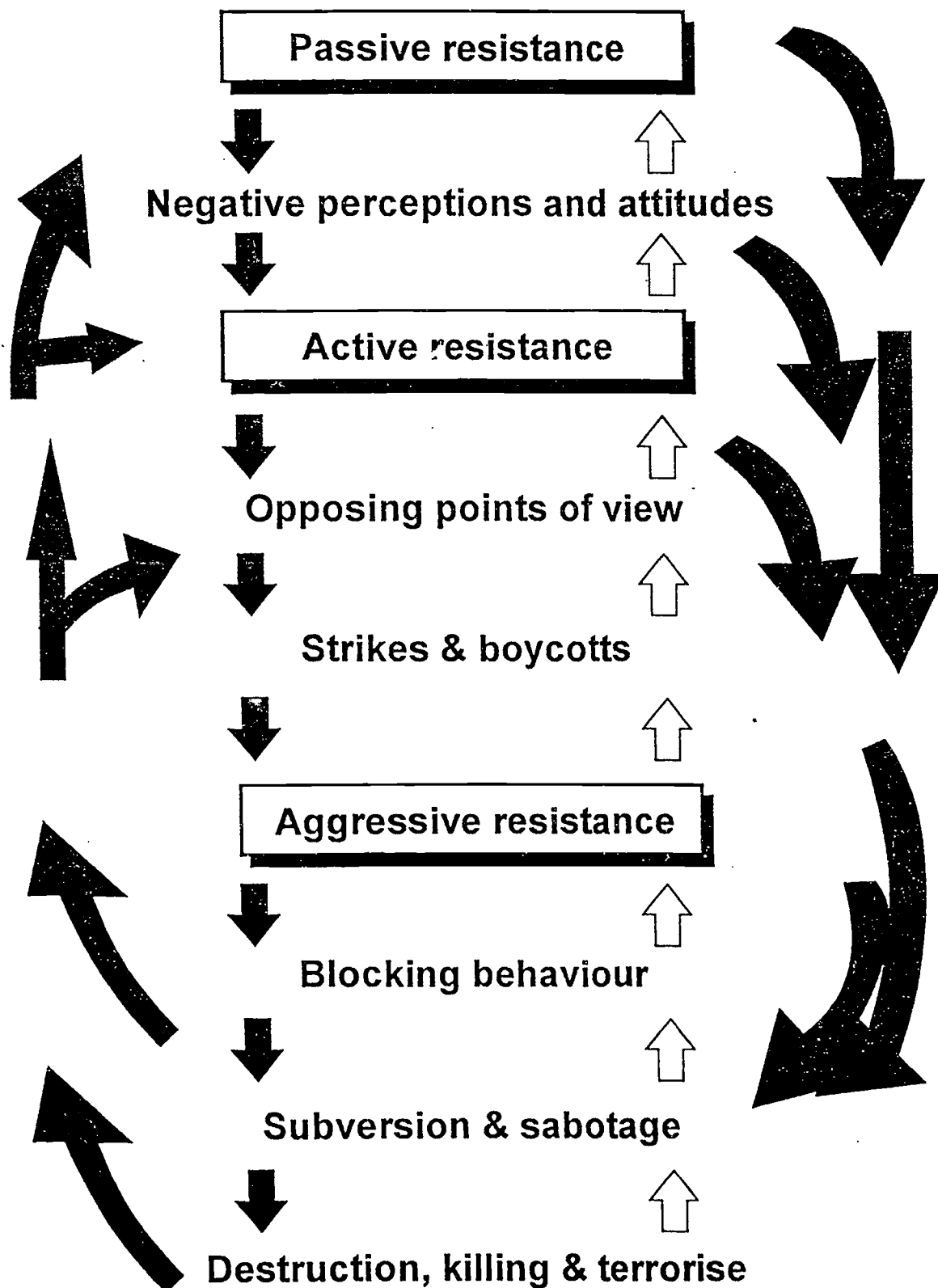


TABLE 1: RANK ORDER OF RESISTANCE FACTORS

| RANK | | QUES- TION | AVERAGE |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1 | FEAR THAT CHANGE WILL CAUSE A LOSS IN JOB SECURITY | 23 | 2.562 |
| 2 | THE LOSS OF ESTABLISHED CUSTOMS WHICH PROVIDE SECURITY | 17 | 2.546 |
| 3 | INCREASED WORK PRESSURE | 26 | 2.531 |
| 4 | FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN | 13 | 2.375 |
| 5 | THE PERCEPTION THAT CHANGE IS NOT REGARDED AS AN IMPROVEMENT | 20 | 2.265 |
| 6 | A DISRUPTION OF THE STATUS QUO (EXISTING PRACTICES) WHICH PROVIDES SATISFACTION | 22 | 2.171 |
| 7 | FEAR THAT CHANGE WILL NOT SUCCEED | 10 | 2.156 |
| 8 | THE ABSENCE OF A NEED TO CHANGE | 11 | 2.078 |
| 9 | THE LACK OF CREATIVE POWER | 18 | 2.031 |
| 9 | THE LACK OF COURAGE TO TAKE RISKS | 12 | 2.031 |
| 11 | AN INABILITY TO HANDLE UNCERTAINTY DURING THE CHANGE PROCESS | 16 | 2.000 |
| 11 | AN IRRECONCILABILITY OF CULTURAL CHA- RACTERISTICS WITH THE PROPOSED CHANGE | 29 | 2.000 |
| 13 | A LOW TOLERANCE FOR CHANGE | 24 | 1.906 |
| 14 | THE LACK OF RESOURCES TO FACILITATE CHANGE | 25 | 1.890 |
| 15 | INSUFFICIENT EVALUATION OF THE PROGRESS OF THE CHANGE | 30 | 1.859 |
| 15 | THE LACK OF ETHICS TO EXPERIMENT AT A SCHOOL | 28 | 1.859 |

TABLE 1: RANK ORDER OF RESISTANCE FACTORS (CONTINUE)

| RANK | | QUES- TION | AVERAGE |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| 17 | TEACHERS WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE AIMS/PURPOSE OF THE CHANGE | 15 | 1.828 |
| 17 | DOUBT ABOUT OWN ABILITIES | 14 | 1.828 |
| 19 | THE LACK OF A POSITIVE CLIMATE FOR CHANGE | 36 | 1.796 |
| 19 | UNCLEAR ROLE DEFINITIONS | 37 | 1.796 |
| 21 | WRONG TIMING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE | 35 | 1.671 |
| 22 | PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE REVEALS NO NEED FOR CHANGE | 27 | 1.625 |
| 23 | APPLICATION OF THE WRONG STRATEGY FOR CHANGE | 34 | 1.609 |
| 24 | POOR PERFORMANCE MOTIVATION | 21 | 1.593 |
| 25 | THE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE SCHOOL DURING THE CHANGE PROCESS | 38 | 1.531 |
| 25 | WEAK STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE | 39 | 1.531 |
| 27 | THE ABSENCE OF PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING | 32 | 1.500 |
| 28 | A HIGH LEVEL OF ORGANISATIONAL CONFLICT | 31 | 1.484 |
| 29 | AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP | 33 | 1.453 |
| 30 | INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND STAFF | 40 | 1.375 |
| 31 | STAFF DISTRUST IN THE MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE SCHOOL | 19 | 1.359 |

SCALE: 1 = NONE; 2 = SLIGHTLY (SMALL);
3 = REASONABLY (FAIRLY); 4 = LARGE